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## Back Cover: Marthy & Mary

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## Martha

Punctuated by the chop chop  
sleek knife on the cutting block  
what I make out is this:  
the hush of a breath drawn in  
and the creak of dry rattan  
as they lean their dusthot bodies  
closer into the silent circle.  
A murmur of amazement,  
a gasp, then the ascending chant  
of agreement, "yes yes it is so!"  
Sounds in the far room —  
like a zephyr wind in the desert.  
And I, garlic and oil to my elbows,  
mix and pound and knead  
with agitation like  
tea-water rolling to a boil.  
When they have eaten my lamb and honeycakes  
to their fill  
I shall have missed  
the stories I long for.

## Mary

All I can see is his foot —  
palesmooth and blue-veined,  
harnessed with a weary sandal.  
Peeping out from under a coarse robe  
it seems vulnerable,  
like an egg in a dusty nest.  
I want to touch this foot  
that has trod in the ruts of the marketplace,  
has rested on a wave,  
drawn circles in the sand.  
Although a breath-hum of words now  
stirs me like bellows fanning the embers,  
I long only to kiss this foot —  
to whisper my whisper my  
words he knows already  
into the graceful curve of his anklebone.  
I smooth my cheek to his instep,  
like an infant's breath,  
barely touching.  
But in this brush a taste  
of the rust nail that will pierce it.

— Kate Marshall Flaherty